



The curious, and incorrect, case of “St. Martin’s Falls”, a type locality for many insect species described by Francis Walker

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Abstract

The curious case of “St. Martin’s Falls”, Hudson’s Bay, Canada, as referred to by Francis Walker and other authors as type locality for many insect species, is resolved for being Martin’s Falls and the history of that misleading name is explained.

Key words: Martin’s Falls, Marten Falls First Nation Reserve, Ogoki, Ogoki Post, George Barnston, Hudson’s Bay Company, Canada

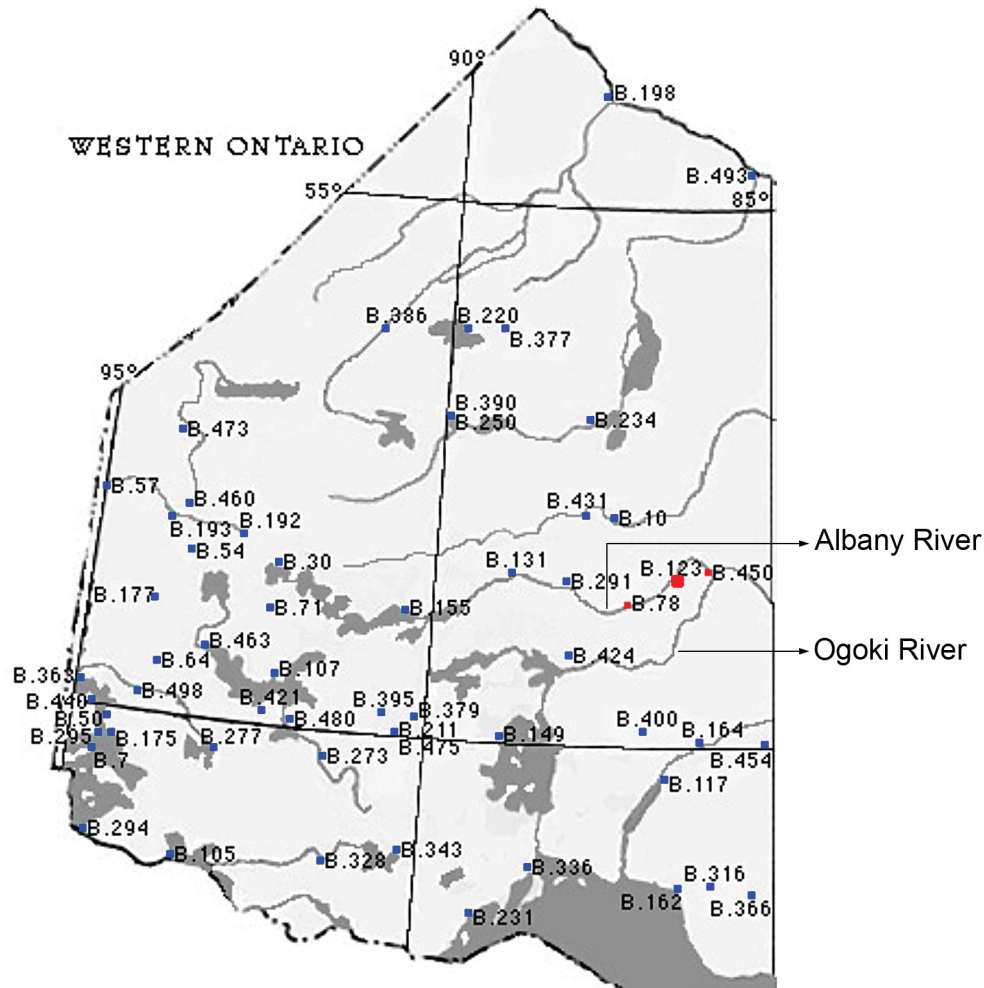
“St. Martin’s Falls” is the type locality for many North American insect species named and described by Francis Walker, allegedly one of the most prolific 19th century taxonomist (Evenhuis 2018). For Lepidoptera alone, 81 species were described by Walker from Martin’s Falls in his 35-volume work “*Catalogue of the specimens of lepidopterous insects in the collection of the British Museum...*” (Walker 1854–1866). While working on a book on the Lepidoptera of Québec (Handfield 1999, 2011) we encountered that place name many times in various publications by many authors, either as type locality, or simply noted as distribution record (apparently lifted from Walker’s works). In nearly all occurrences of the locality name in Walker’s works, the name of George Barnston is associated with the specimens from that locality. The additional mention of “Albany River” in conjunction with Martin Falls indicates that the place is located somewhere in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Albany River runs for 982 km from Lake St. Joseph in northwestern Ontario and empties into James Bay, its drainage covering an area of 135,200 square kilometers. In the 19th century, access to this region was predominantly via waterways. Even today, there is very limited road or land access to this vast area.

However, figuring out exactly where Martin Falls lies on a map is strangely problematic. A search of modern or current maps and gazetteers for the provinces of Ontario or Manitoba (Canada) returns several locations containing the words “Martin Falls”, “Martin’s Fall”, or variations thereof. The place name “Ogoki” also comes up associated with Martin Falls. Could the latter be Martin’s Falls Indian Reserve No. 65 situated today near the Town of Ogoki? Or somewhere else? We sought to determine the exact location of this historical collecting site using a combination of historical and archival evidence.

The trading post of Martin’s Falls

Martin’s Falls (51.30N, 86.20W) was a fur trading post of the Hudson’s Bay Company on Albany River (Figs. 1–2). It was opened in 1794 and was probably named in honour of Humphrey Marten (Martin) (born in England in 1729 and died c.1790 – 1792), chief factor (trader) of the York Factory post (open in 1688, closed in 1957) (57.00.09 N, 92.18.18 W), the chief outpost of the Hudson’s Bay Company on the shores of Hudson Bay at the mouth of Hayes River. Martin’s Falls was renamed in 1795 as Ernest House (in honour Ernest August, 5th son of King George III). The post was closed in 1799. In 1818, with the increase in fur trading and as another post in the region, Gloucester House, was becoming insufficient to

handle the trade volume, the Hudson's Bay Company reopened Ernest House under the name of Martin's Falls. That post was definitely closed in 1924 and fur trading activities were transferred to an Indian Reservation Post named Marten Falls across the river from the settlement of Ogoki.



The collector: George Barnston

George Barnston (c. 1800–1883) (Fig. 3) was an employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1820 to 1858 either as a clerk, chief factor, or chief of fur trading post, and from 1834 to 1840 was stationed at Martin’s Falls (Brown & Van Kirk 2003). Barnston studied nature and collected natural history specimens, including insects (Barnston 1841). In the early 1840s, he took a two-year leave to England, where he visited the British Museum of Natural History (now known as the Natural History Museum). In 1844, he donated his insect collection to the Museum. The accession number for Barnston’s insects in the Museum book is 44-17 (the 17th accession for the year 1844) and they include the following (David Lees, pers. comm. 2019):

- “C—893 specimens of Coleoptera
- “C—28 specimens of Orthoptera
- “C—720 specimens of Hymenoptera
- “C—134 specimens of Neuroptera
- “C—106 specimens of Hemiptera
- “C—25 specimens of Homoptera
- “C—200 specimens of Lepidoptera
- “C—677 specimens of Diptera
- “C—12 specimens of Aptera.

Those specimens were most likely collected during his time at the fur trading post of Martin’s Falls.

In a letter to George Simpson (undated, cited in Brown & Van Kirk 2003), Barnston wrote “Finding that I was kindly received at the British Museum, I handed over without reservation all my Collection of Insects to that Institution, at which the Gentlemen there expressed high gratification.” Over half of his specimens were new to the Museum.

Barnston’s material made up the principal basis of Francis Walker’s material when describing North American insects, especially the northern part of North America. In his earlier works (Walker 1844, 1846), Walker used “Martin’s Falls, Hudson’s Bay” as type locality. Later, for an unknown reason, he switched to “St. Martins Falls” (Walker 1848, 1854–1866). The latter has been widely cited in taxonomic and entomological publications.

The meaning of the abbreviation “St.” is unclear. It has been confusingly used in conjunction with the description of Martin’s Falls as a post. For example: “Again Mr. Vincent, of Albany, goes into the interior to St. Martin’s Falls, an outpost distant about 300 miles from his home [...]” (Anonymous 1862, p. 120). In the census of 1911, the locality is described as only “Martin’s Falls” (Library and Archives Canada 2020)

Barnston was a prolific correspondent and many of the letters he sent from that trading post are preserved in the Manitoba archives. All letters from that time were inscribed “Martin’s Falls, [date]”, never “St. Martin’s Falls” (Manitoba archives, acc. 29 Mar 2019). Barnston (1841) wrote a long paper about the climate and fauna of the trading post. In the introduction of that paper (p. 252), he noted that “Martin’s Falls is a *station* [italics added] on Albany River, thirty miles from Gloucester [House] (...)”. It is significant that Barnston used the word “station” in describing the Martin’s Falls trading post. A footnote on the same page gave geographic coordinates for Martin’s Falls as “at about Lat. 51.30 N. Long. 86.20 W.” This location is far removed from Ogoki [Post].

Thus it appears that the abbreviation “St” stands for “Station”, not “Saint”. The abbreviation “St.” when placed ahead of a noun usually refers to “Saint”. However, Barnston never referred to the place as “Saint”, only as a “station” (Barnston 1841). Thus normal usage would be to call it “Martin’s Falls Station”. It would be unusual to say “Station Martin’s Falls”, as would placing the abbreviation for station ahead. There is no evidence whatsoever that a place called “Saint Martin’s Falls”, abbreviated as “St. Martin’s Falls” existed.

An old volume from the Ontario Government (1879) contains a nice description of both the post and the falls of Martin’s Falls, again the place being referred to only as Martin’s Falls without any indication of any “St”:

“From Moosewaké Lake [Gloucester] to Martin’s Falls, is a distance of twenty miles, the river [Albany] is full of islands and rapids. Martin’s Falls, so called, is really only a rapid of some 12 or 15 feet easy descent, and readily passed by canoes. [...] At Martin’s Falls is a Hudson’s Bay Post, “where hay, turnips, and potatoes have for a long time, been successfully cultivated, and cattle thrive well.” [...] So free is it from obstruction below the Fall, that the Hudson’s Bay boats, on descending are allowed to drift night with the stream, the submerged top of a pine tree being sufficient to keep them in the channel.” (p. 36).



FIGURE 3. Photograph of George Barnston, circa 1858 when in office as chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Saguenay. Image B-00101, courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives, used with permission.

Martin's Falls specimen labels

When George Barnston gave his collection to the British Museum, the only labels attached to his specimens were small, single, round, thick-paper labels with the words “Hudson’s Bay” on the upper side, and a pair of numbers similarly handwritten on the underside or on a second, similarly-sized round label. For example, the numbers “44.17” referred to the 17th accession to the Museum in 1844 (David Lees, pers. comm. 15 Jan 2019). Later, more labels were added to the specimens, in some cases even typewritten labels inscribed “St. Martin’s Falls” (David Lees, pers. comm.). By whom, why and when these labels were added remains undetermined. It is also unclear whether Barnston himself labelled the specimens that he gave to the British Museum; or if he did, whether his labels were later removed and replaced by the small round labels.

Figure 4 shows an example of labels for a type specimen of *Rhamphomyia mallos* (Diptera) described by Walker in 1849. The two round labels (Hudson’s Bay) and (44 17) are the labels attached to the specimen when being accessioned at the British Museum of Natural History collection, as recorded in the Museum accession book. All other labels, including the typewritten “St. Martin’s Falls” were added afterwards.

The old accession book of the British Museum of Natural History does not clarify the situation because the annotation “(St Martins falls)” appears to have been added subsequent to the original text (Fig. 5).

Text of p. 156 (part of left side of page):

44	17	893	<i>Coleoptera</i>	<i>District of Hudson’s Bay (Albany river</i>
		28	<i>Orthoptera</i>	“ (St Martins falls)
		720	<i>Hymenoptera</i> [Nos need modified with the specimens – cf 1910]	“ (see
		134	<i>Neuroptera</i>	“
		106	<i>Hemiptera</i>	“
		25	<i>Homoptera</i>	“
		200	<i>Lepidoptera</i>	“
		677	<i>Diptera</i>	“
		12	<i>Aptera</i>	

Text of p. 156 (part of right side of page):

<i>Presented by Geo Barnston Esq.</i>	<i>These insects were collected by the donour. The numbers + MS names refer to a list not sent with the insects; most of the names from the want of books are not to be depended on, so far as the genera are concerned</i>
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FIGURE 4. Labels of the type of *Rhamphomyia mallos* Walker (Diptera), shown in Sinclair & Saigusa (2018, p. 135, fig.13). The left two labels show the underside of the corresponding labels in the center. Used with permission.

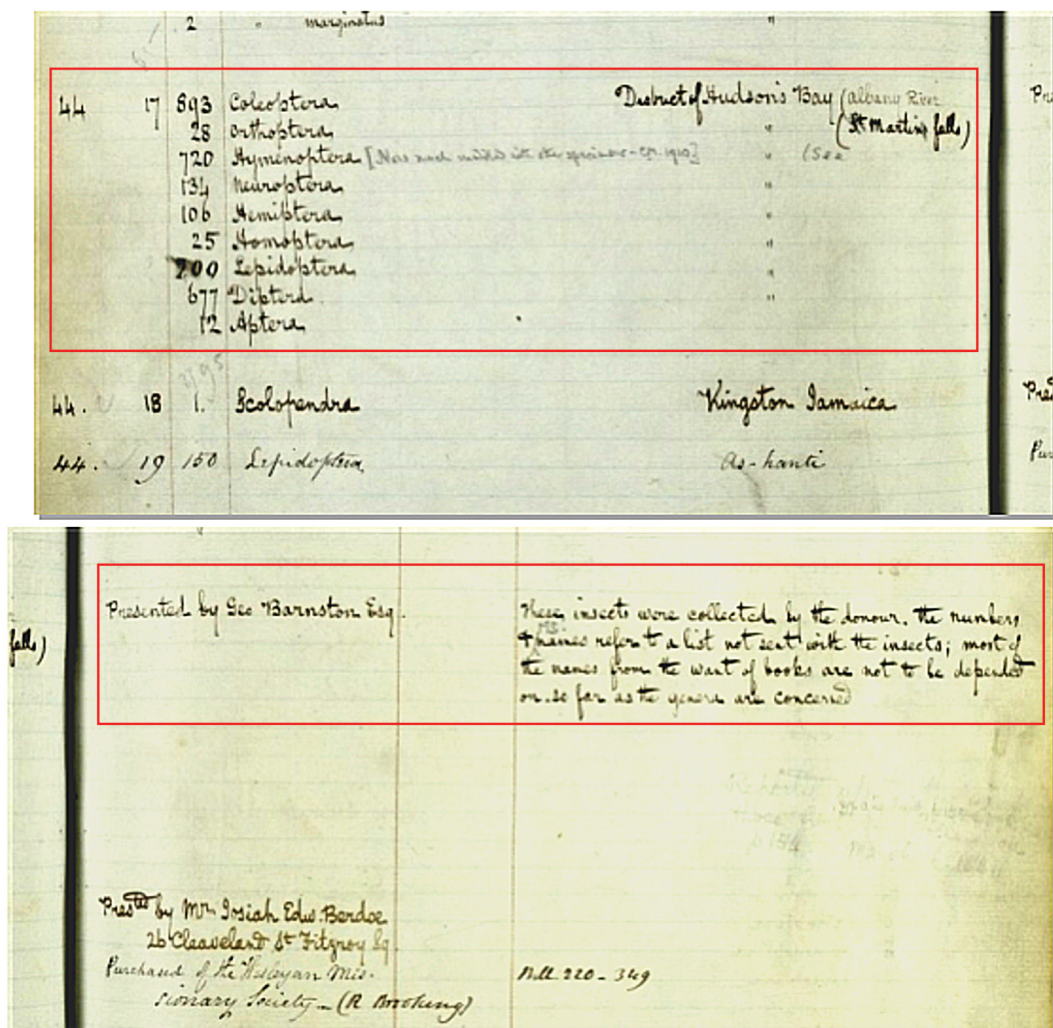


FIGURE 5. Sections of page 156 of the accession book at the Natural History Museum for the year 1844 recording Barnston's specimens as accession "44 17". Note the handwritten annotation of "(St Martins falls)". Images courtesy of Dr. David Lees and the Natural History Museum, London, used with permission.

We have no idea why Francis Walker changed his way of noting that type locality and changed his labeling from "Martin's Falls" to "St. Martin's Falls" over the course of publishing his multi-volume catalogues. Historical and archival evidence, however, clearly indicates that the correct name for the type locality is "Martin's Falls". Based on Barnston's account and correspondence as well as historical records of the Hudson's Bay Company, we conclude that the correct name is "Martin's Falls", and that it is located at 51.30N, 86.20W. Other denominations, variations, or other additional abbreviations are deemed incorrect or erroneous.

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